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ABSTRACT

The unusually high rate of teacher turnover in American Indian reservation schools (up to 41% of new teachers on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Reservation) is an ongoing source of distress to administrators, teachers, and community members. Teachers who move on tend to be young, inexperienced (four or fewer years in teaching), single, and from or preferring urban areas. School factors correlated with high turnover include lack of administrative support, low academic standards, inadequate professional development policies, low salaries, small enrollments with high percentages of Native American students, and inadequate curriculum development. Key community characteristics causing turnover are geographic isolation and language and cultural barriers. Suggestions for reducing teacher turnover, based on research and administrator experience, are recruitment of experienced teachers from rural backgrounds and accurate descriptions of job, school, community, and regional benefits. Rural colleges, colleges with Indian or multicultural programs, and Indian-related agencies can help with teacher recruitment. Teachers and tribal representatives are valuable additions to screening/interview committees. Good induction programs, mentoring programs, social gatherings with community members and district staff, professional development programs, and effective administrative leadership will all assist in retaining good teachers. (NEC)

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PROGRAM REPORT

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Reducing Teacher Turnover in Reservation Schools

A Guide for Administrators

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October 1987

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A Guide for Administrators

Kathleen Cotton

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Contents

Acknowledgements vii

Teacher Turnover: Nature and Incidence of the Problem 1
- Introduction 1
- How the Guide was Developed 3
- The Teacher Turnover Problem 4
- What Can and Can't Be Done to Reduce Turnover 5

Teacher Recruitment and Selection 7
- Desirable Teacher Characteristics 7
- Promoting Your School and Community 10
- Outreach and Recruitment Methods 12
- Teacher Selection Methods 13

Teacher Retention 19
- Teacher Induction 19
- Building Teacher Ties to the School and Community 20
- Professional Growth and Development 21
- Administrative Leadership 22

Appendices
- A. Position Guide 27
- B. Need Areas Identified by Maslow and Attributes of Rural Communities 29
- C. Resources for Recruitment for Reservation Schools in the Northwest 31
- D. References and Other Resources 33

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Teacher Turnover:
Nature and Incidence of the Problem

Introduction

Schools located on or near Indian reservations have a much higher rate of teacher turnover than schools in other kinds of settings. Reservation schools are almost invariably *rural* schools, and teacher turnover in rural schools is higher than in urban or suburban settings — nearly nine percent nationally in 1983 and much higher in many areas.

Indian reservation schools have unusually high teacher turnover.

The turnover rate in reservation schools is even higher than in other rural schools. On the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, for example, one researcher found that 41 percent of new teachers do not return after their first year of teaching. While not all reservation schools experience turnover rates this high, there is no doubt that teacher turnover is a serious problem in reservation schools in the Northwest and across the country.

High teacher mobility is costly, disruptive, and strains school/community relations.

This high rate of teacher mobility is an ongoing source of distress to administrators, teachers and community members concerned about the education of children in these schools. Frequent teacher turnover inhibits the development of a systematic, coherent academic program. The process of replacing teachers and inducting new ones consumes significant amounts of time and financial resources — resources which school and community people would much prefer to use for school programs and activities. And while a certain

amount of "new blood" — new people with new ideas — is welcome in most school environments, no school staff want to feel that they are always beginning, starting over, rebuilding the school's instructional team and programs. In addition, school and community relations are strained when parents and community members are unable to form stable connections with school staff members.

Factors of size, cost, and isolation can impede administrators' efforts to fight the turnover problem.

Administrators of reservation schools with high teacher turnover are generally very concerned about the problem and want to change it. Unfortunately, they are often hampered in their attempts to do so. For one thing, the published resources containing guidelines and tips for teacher selection and retention are often largely irrelevant to reservation schools, since these schools frequently lack the size, budget, and organizational support needed to implement the suggestions described in these resources. In addition, reservation school administrators are usually isolated from one another, and thus their access to one another to learn and share ideas for reducing turnover is very limited. Finally, administrator turnover itself tends to be a problem in reservation schools, which also disrupts the continuity of the school program.

This guide can help users understand and reduce turnover.

This guide was developed for you, the reservation school administrator who wishes to have a better understanding of the issues surrounding teacher turnover and to gain information that can help reduce turnover in your school. District superintendents and staff, board members, and teachers may also wish to familiarize themselves with this information and use it in those aspects of their work that touch on teacher selection and retention.

The guide includes:

- a discussion of the reasons for the high teacher turnover rate in reservation schools
- information on effective strategies for recruiting teachers for these schools

- information on proven methods for retaining teachers, including guidelines for administrative leadership

How the Guide Was Developed

This guide is the product of several different information gathering efforts. These efforts began early in 1986 when Dr. Steven Nelson of the Research and Development Program for Indian Education conducted a **review of the literature** on teacher turnover in reservation schools. Because published studies and other resources on this topic were very limited, the literature on teacher turnover in rural schools in general was also reviewed.

Based on findings from the literature review, Indian Program staff developed a **questionnaire** which outlined potential issues related to teacher mobility. This questionnaire was used to survey reservation school principals in the Northwest; it was distributed to the principals of all 248 schools on or near Indian reservations in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington in the spring of 1986. One hundred fifty-nine (sixty-four percent) of the survey forms were returned. The purposes of the survey were to:

- determine the actual incidence of teacher turnover in a given school year (1984-85)
- identify the school, teacher, and community factors related to teacher mobility and stability
- identify schools with very high or very low turnover for follow-up interviews

In October and November 1986, Steve Nelson made **site visits** to seven schools in Montana and Washington which had reported either very high or very low teacher turnover. Information gained from teachers and administrators during these sites visits helped to flesh out data gathered through the survey.

Indian Program staff gathered data through a literature review, survey, site visits, panel discussion, and published resources.

Indian Program staff then hosted a **panel discussion** involving seven principals and superintendents from reservations in the Northwest. Held at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) in December 1986, the discussion produced valuable information on teacher selection and retention from the experience of these educators.

Finally, **general resources** on teacher recruitment, selection, induction and retention were used. While the relevance and value of these resources to reservation schools is limited, they did provide good background information and ideas to adapt for use in this guide.

The Teacher Turnover Problem

What causes high teacher turnover? Results of the literature review and principal survey indicate that high teacher mobility can be the result of teacher characteristics, school characteristics, and community characteristics.

Teacher characteristics cause some turnover; school and community factors can also cause teachers to leave.

Teacher Characteristics. What kinds of teachers choose to leave a reservation school and community after living and working there only a short time? Researchers and survey respondents have identified several characteristics among teachers who tend not to stay in reservation environments. They are likely to be relatively young and inexperienced (four or fewer years in the teaching field), and they are likely to be single. Perhaps most important, they are likely to be people who are from and/or prefer cities rather than small towns or rural areas. Thus, these teachers tend not to be the ones to "put down roots" in the reservation community; they are likely to think of "home" as somewhere other than the community and to view their stay as temporary.

School Characteristics. When teachers leave a reservation school and community, what school problems do they cite as contributing to their decision to leave? Researchers identify "administration" as the main reason teachers give for leaving. Specifically, teachers identify such things as lack

of support for teachers by administrators; low academic standards; and policies concerning professional development, contractual agreements, personnel matters, and support services. Departing teachers also cite low salaries as influencing their decisions to leave. Other school factors correlated with high turnover in the 1986 survey include: small enrollments, proportionally greater numbers of Indian students, limited availability of teacher housing, lack of opportunity for advancement, insufficient inservice, and inadequate curriculum development.

It is commonly believed that salary level is the main reason — or a main reason — teachers accept or leave positions. The general research on teacher recruitment, turnover, and related matters shows that other factors--particularly working conditions--are much more important. The research conducted for this project corroborates the general research and even suggests that unusually high salaries may be a **deterrent** to attracting applicants. While salary level is important to applicants, they can become suspicious of very high salaries, fearing that these may represent compensation for poor school, community, or geographic conditions.

Salary level is important, but teachers are more concerned about working conditions.

Community Characteristics. Geographic isolation from social, economic, and professional ties is a key factor in teacher turnover. In addition, language and cultural barriers sometimes leave non-Indian teachers feeling even more isolated and without support. Communities where there is greater support for education had less turnover than less supportive communities.

What Can and Can't Be Done to Reduce Turnover

What can you do to reduce the incidence of teacher turnover in your school? In reviewing the factors related to teacher mobility, you can easily see that, in some cases, the answer is **nothing.** Geographic and economic conditions can't be altered by the administrative decision making process, nor can

cultural or most other community factors. Indeed, you probably would not want to change these elements even if you could, since the cultural and geographic attributes of reservation schools are often their most appealing features.

Many of the factors associated with teacher turnover can be changed.

Fortunately, many of the factors associated with high teacher turnover are amenable to change. As noted previously, issues related to administration were the most frequently cited cause of teachers leaving reservation schools. Among schools with low turnover, the most frequently cited reason given for staying was the quality of the school and its program — a good school with small classes, opportunities for professional growth, good working conditions, high teacher morale, job satisfaction, and supportive administrative leadership.

In the sections which follow, we offer suggestions based on research and administrator experience for reducing teacher turnover.

Teacher Recruitment and Selection

Desirable Teacher Characteristics

Content area knowledge, instructional skills, and classroom management expertise are, of course, basic requirements for anyone seeking a teaching position anywhere. Beyond these basics, a number of other attributes are highly desirable for teachers in reservation school settings.

Looking at the research and survey results outlined earlier, a profile emerges of the kind of teacher most likely to leave a reservation school and community. This teacher is young, unmarried, relatively inexperienced, and more geared by background and/or preference to a nonrural environment than a rural one. This does not mean that a candidate with one or more of these characteristics ought to be automatically excluded from consideration. It does suggest, however, that an applicant who has most or all of these attributes may be a "high risk" in terms of his/her willingness to make a long-term commitment to the school and community.

Experienced teachers from rural backgrounds are most likely to remain in reservation schools.

Special effort should be made in the interview to ascertain the candidate's reasons for wishing to live and work in your community. Ask yourself if the candidate seems to be mature, to have his/her life in order, and to have clarity about personal and professional goals. This should help you determine if an otherwise appealing candidate has a realistic understanding of your school and its setting and is likely to have the "staying power" you are seeking.

In general, research and seasoned reservation school administrators indicate that the best candidate is one who has

experience teaching in schools with Indian students. When contacting the candidate's previous supervisors, ask how the candidate interacted with these students. Was he/she capable of listening nonjudgmentally? Was he/she calm, nonconfrontational, and sensitive to the cultural characteristics of the students? Probe these areas when interviewing as well. Is your candidate aware of the students cultural traits? How does he/she respond when made aware of them?

Assuming that the candidate possesses the required skills and knowledge, it is a definite plus if he/she is from the area where your school is located. The section on teacher recruitment offers ideas for recruiting local people and others from rural/reservation settings.

A newly graduated teacher with no rural or reservation background may find adjustment difficult.

You will want to be especially cautious when screening and interviewing anyone who is seeking his or her first teaching job, if this person has no rural experience or experience with Indian people. Getting a feel for teaching is a demanding experience and if, in addition to learning the rigors of the teaching profession your candidate is trying to adjust to the newness of a rural setting with a high percentage of Indian people, the chances of success are reduced.

A teacher with good general teaching experience is probably in a better position to weather the "culture shock" of adjusting to a new geographic and cultural mileu. Again, don't automatically delete from your consideration the new teacher who has never spent time in a rural or reservation setting. Just be aware of the potential drawbacks, make certain the candidate is aware of them, and structure your interview so as to assess the likelihood that he/she will be a stable member of your teaching staff.

Desirable teacher traits include taking responsibility for children's learning, being willing to make commitments, and pursuing professional growth.

Does the candidate see him/herself as responsible for children's learning? Listen for a sense of personal accountability for learning outcomes. If the candidate seems to find fault with outside forces for preventing him/her from teaching successfully, he/she may be unwilling or unable to take responsibility for the learning of the children in your school.

Is the candidate interested in and capable of making a long-term professional commitment? Your ideal candidate is one who wants to remain in the teaching profession for the foreseeable future and who wishes to work within your school system for an extended period of time.

In reviewing the candidate's resume and support materials, in speaking with the candidate, and in speaking with others about the candidate, be attentive to the degree of "fit" between the candidate's educational philosophy/approach and that of your school staff. Mary Cihak Jensen, in her 1987 monograph on teacher selection and related issues, advocates a healthy diversity among staff members. She notes at the same time, however, that existing staff tend to hire people similar to themselves, even when other candidates might have superior qualifications.

Diversity of philosophy and style among staff is healthy, but prospective teachers should fit in with school and community values.

You will need to strike a balance between these extremes. Diversity is healthy and students benefit from exposure to a range of styles and points of view. At the same time, we know that teachers whose styles are "out of synch" with community values and with the learning styles of Indian students tend not be successful in reservation schools.

Commitment to one's own professional growth is a highly desirable attribute in a teacher. Pay attention to your candidate's comments about increasing his/her skills, learning new methodologies, and sharing ideas with others.

Other characteristics identified as desirable for teachers in reservation schools include: holding high expectations of oneself and one's students, being goal oriented, having empathy for other people, and having a positive and open attitude in one's interactions with others.

Researchers and reservation school administrators have also identified several characteristics shown to be **undesirable** — for teachers in general and certainly in reservation school teachers. Beware, they warn, of people who are:

Experienced administrators call attention to undesirable teacher traits.

- rigid and inflexible in their views and working style
- overly concerned with discipline and structure
- "full of themselves"; think they have all the answers
- burned out
- heavily oriented to/reliant upon commercial texts
- lacking in self-confidence
- "job hoppers"; have made frequent job changes in the past
- negative in their reaction to the geographical setting

Promoting Your School and Community

You will, of course, need to be aware of and adhere to general district policies regarding recruitment and selection, as well as attending to the needs of your particular school. Clarity about district policies regarding such matters as moonlighting, residence requirements, probationary periods, relocation expenses, and so on can help to guide the recruitment/selection process and reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings.

The advertisement you develop to inform and attract potential applicants will have three main elements:

- an accurate description of the job your are seeking to fill
- a description of your community and school, including a description of the student population
- information about regional and job-related side benefits

A complete position description will include information on the general nature of the position and its district context, its dynamic features, required and desired teacher skills and characteristics, and so on. In order that all relevant information will be included and presented in a logical order, we recommend that you use a position guide such as that presented in Appendix A.

Position descriptions generally include some basic information about the school and community. In advertising positions for reservation schools, however, it is especially important to provide these details. The authorities on teacher recruitment note the importance of "selling" your community and school to prospective applicants. As Jensen (1987) points out regarding rural schools in general, "potential applicants may know more about rural school's disadvantages than about the advantages they frequently offer — smaller classes, greater participation in decision making, community support."

Highlight the advantages of rural/ reservation schools when advertising your position.

A clear and accurate portrayal will call attention to the special nature of your setting, highlight its particularly attractive features, and avoid misleading readers as to the nature of your social and educational context. Jorgensen and Epsey (1986) note additional positive aspects of rural schools and communities which you may wish to cite when advertising positions:

- absence of bureaucratic barriers
- sense of community and family interdependence with the school
- the right size to give personal attention
- slower pace of living and working
- raising children in a more controlled environment

In addition, Helge and Marrs (1982) suggest using Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a structure for presenting the advantageous features of rural schools. This depiction (Appendix B) can be expanded to include the special positive features of reservation schools and of your school in particular.

Your advertisement should also include information about the geographic setting, the cultural and recreational opportunities available, the cost of living, and so on. Perhaps your school is located in a beautiful setting close to fishing, hunting, or skiing areas. Many reservations are situated in such areas, and while these recreational offerings can be a powerful draw, discussion of them in your advertising materials should be approached with caution. Sometimes, out of carelessness or especially if a school has experienced difficulty filling positions, there is a temptation to emphasize the beauty and outdoor sports opportunities of the setting so strongly that the details of the job, school, and community are pushed into the background. While this kind of advertising may attract candidates, it is unlikely to attract appropriate ones. Be sure your advertisement focuses first on the position and the school setting, then on the community, and only then provides details about the recreational and other offerings of the geographic location.

Focus on the position first, then the community, then the advantages of the geographic setting.

Outreach and Recruitment Methods

To increase your chances of attracting strong candidates for your position, think about the list of desirable characteristics for teachers in reservation schools. Then think about where people with those characteristics are most likely to be found. You may wish to send position announcements to universities located in or near rural areas; these often draw students who are from rural backgrounds and who prefer to continue living and working in rural settings. Some universities also have multicultural or even Indian-specific programs, and students enrolled in these may take an interest in your position. Universities sometimes have courses specifically con-

Recruit in rural colleges and in colleges with Indian or multicultural programs.

cerned with education in rural areas; these, too would be promising places to send your advertising materials.

In addition to using your own network of administrative contact people to identify and locate potential candidates, you may also wish to disseminate your position announcement through:

- Indian education specialists at state departments of education (SEA)
- Regional Title IV resource centers
- Regional offices of the Bureau of Indian Affairs
- The NWREL Indian Education Program

Contact people from Indian-related agencies can help with recruitment.

The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of contact people from these agencies in the Northwest states are listed in Appendix C. These people are also good sources of information about individuals and additional agencies to contact. The state directories of American Indian resources, available through the SEA specialists, represent another avenue to ideas for recruitment.

Teacher Selection Methods

In the section on desirable teacher characteristics we offered some suggestions of ways to identify the presence or absence of these characteristics as you screen and interview candidates. This section includes additional suggestions for your selection procedure.

Teachers and tribal representatives are valuable additions to screening/interview committees.

Research and the practical experience of reservation school administrators support the involvement of teachers in the screening and interviewing of applicants. In addition, many reservation schools routinely include representation from the local tribal group(s) on their screening/interview committees.

Interview only highly qualified applicants--even if this means reopening the position and advertising again.

In screening, your committee should select for an interview only those applicants whose application materials indicate that they are highly qualified and otherwise suitable for the position. That is, if your recruitment efforts somehow attracted only applicants who are underqualified or "borderline" cases, do not invite them for an interview (much less hire them!) just because they are the best among an unsuitable group of possibilities. Waiting and trying again can be frustrating, but experienced administrators find that this is preferable to expending time and energy on inappropriate applicants.

In-person interviews help to insure hiring the right person.

Always conduct an in-person interview which involves the participation of teacher, tribal, and district representatives. Perhaps you administer a very small school with very limited resources, and you are tempted to hire an applicant on the basis of good application materials, positive comments from previous supervisors, and an impressive telephone interview. Experienced reservation and other rural school administrators caution against giving in to this temptation. For one thing, an in-person interview is much more revealing than paper and telephone contact alone. For another, in-person interviewing enables you to make use of the impressions and evaluations of a number of people. "Mistakes in personnel selection are costly and have long-term effects," Jensen reminds us, and in-person interviewing can reduce the likelihood of such mistakes.

Experts in this area recommend thoroughness. Be certain to check each candidate's references. Talk with principals who have supervised the candidate and, if possible, with teachers who have worked with him/her. Ask previous supervisors if they would hire the candidate again and to give their reasons.

A U. S. Department of Education research report identifies the qualities which members of interview committees should possess. These include:

- alertness to cues
- ability to make fine distinctions and perceive accurately
- ability to make immediate and accurate records
- willingness to use criteria established by the organization
- ability to suppress biases

It is not likely that all members of your interview group will possess all of these qualities. However, each quality should be represented and each member listened to carefully in his/her area of strength.

Committee members should have interviewing skills and use a structured interview format.

The interview format and content will differ greatly from one school to another in accordance with differing selection criteria, committee membership, and so on. We do, however, strongly recommend that you use a **structured** interview process. You may wish to use commercial materials designed to facilitate teacher interviews or adapt these to fit local needs.

Reservation school administrators have effectively used/adapted such commercial products as the Teacher Perceiver Specialist Training materials developed by Selection Research, Inc., Lincoln, Nebraska, which help schools and districts to select teachers with the qualities they desire. Another system administrators have found useful is Project Empathy, developed by the Omaha Public Schools and used to identify effective teaching capabilities in candidates.

Remember that the interview is only one of several measures to consider. It is important, but its importance should not overwhelm the other data on the candidate. "As a single measure," says Jensen, "the interview should be structured to gather the specific information it is best at gathering: in-

dicators of social competence, commitment, pragmatic problem-solving skills, thought processes, and elements of subject matter knowledge."

Considerate, professional treatment and information on teacher induction will attract top candidates.

The interview provides an opportunity for your committee to identify the presence or absence of characteristics desirable for teachers in reservation schools. Experts also suggest that the interview session be used to inform the candidate about the nature of your school's methods for inducting new teachers. "Personnel directors who clarify their induction strategies to potential teachers report that the most capable candidates are attracted to programs of strong support and high expectations" (Jensen 1987). This is especially important to candidates for teaching positions in reservation schools, as these teachers can anticipate the need for support and encouragement in a new and probably isolated setting.

Author William Goldstein (1986) encourages interviewers to "think like candidates," that is, be aware of the emotions and tensions candidates are likely to feel and take steps to put them at ease. Top candidates, says Goldstein, will receive multiple offers, and their choice may well be based on how they were treated in interviews.

When your committee members have interviewed the candidates, looked at interview results in light of other information, and come to agreement on their top two or three candidates, you can then review these and make your recommendation to the superintendent.

Take your time and rely on your intuition, say seasoned administrators.

Experienced administrators of reservation schools offer two additional guidelines for the teacher selection process. One of these has to do with time. As with recruitment, selection takes time, and you are strongly encouraged not to give in to time pressure. Be thorough in carrying out each part of the process, and your investment of time and energy will pay off. The other guideline concerns intuition. Teacher selection is a rational process up to a point, but you and your committee are also encouraged to rely on your "gut" feeling about the

suitability of your candidates. If a candidate appears qualified and interested, but something "just doesn't feel right," discuss your concerns with one another and do not hire a person about whom you have serious doubts.

In concluding her suggestions for teacher selection, Jensen provides a list of recommendations schools and districts can use to improve their selection process. Some of these may be more applicable than others to your school; they are offered as methods which have worked for others:

Researchers offer recommendations for improving teacher selection.

1. Develop written policies for selection.
2. Treat candidates with fairness and respect.
3. Train those who select teachers (in order that their choices won't be unduly influenced by factors such as first impressions and personal biases).
4. Involve several people in the decision.
5. Consider a variety of information about candidates.
6. Learn from successes and mistakes; validate your process.

Teacher Retention

Teacher Induction

The recruitment and selection process just described can help reduce teacher turnover in your school through achieving an optimal match between the school/community setting and the teachers hired. Equally important are the actions you and your staff take to retain your teachers.

Good induction programs can help retain good teachers.

Teacher induction, as discussed in the educational literature, most often refers to the efforts made to orient and involve the person who is new to the teaching profession. However, many of the strategies used with beginning teachers can, with some modification, be used profitably with those teachers in new positions. For example, mentoring programs, in which newly hired teachers (whether they are new to the teaching profession or not) are paired with an established teacher or teachers, can be very useful. The mentor(s) can help the new teacher with such things as:

- understanding the nature and needs of your student population
- becoming familiar with your instructional program
- learning ways to relate and communicate effectively with parents and community members
- learning your school's policies, procedures, norms and traditions

- learning teaching and classroom approaches which are effective with the students at your school

Mentoring programs can be valuable to both the new teacher and the mentor.

It is important that those serving as mentors have both good teaching skills and the ability to communicate effectively with the newcomer. Jensen cites some additional traits which are desirable in a mentor teacher. He/she should be someone who:

- enjoys the chance to learn from the new teacher and from the helping relationship
- views working with the newcomer as an opportunity to enhance his/her own skills
- will communicate to the new teacher attitudes and values which fit into your school and community

Larger school systems sometimes provide mentor teachers stipends and release time to create opportunities for them to work with new teachers and compensate them for their efforts. This may or may not be possible in your setting. Some sort of reward/acknowledgement, however, should be offered to those who serve in the mentor role.

Arranging meetings in which teachers can discuss policies, issues and other matters of concern is another effective way to help new teachers gain understanding and a sense of belonging. Ongoing monthly staff meetings by specialty areas can foster staff cohesiveness and increase teacher's investment in remaining a part of your school and community.

Building Teacher Ties to the School and Community

In a school which is on or near an Indian reservation, induction into the school must include induction into the community. Give your new teachers a tour and orientation to the local tribes and other components of the community. Experienced reservation school administrators recommend arrang-

ing a dinner or other social gathering where new staff can meet and get acquainted with tribal elders. Make certain that new staff members are given basic information about the nature of the tribe(s) who live in the area — their customs, tribal organization, and so forth. The purpose of such a gathering should be to establish mutual understanding, cooperation, support for the school, and to begin getting to know one another; it should not be a one-time "parade".

Social gatherings with community members and district staff can give new teachers a feeling of belonging.

Visits to the tribal social center can foster acceptance of your new teacher by the community and instill a feeling of belonging. Finally, while sensitivity to cultural elements is important, remember — and help your new staff to remember — that Indian parents have basically the same concerns and interests regarding their children as any other parents. As one spokesperson put it, don't pay so much attention to the culture that you no longer see the person.

Induction into the community should also include social gatherings with district representatives and with members of the school board. Remembering that teachers who leave reservation schools often do so because they feel like "outsiders" in one way or another, these school and community induction efforts can go a long way toward dispelling new teachers' feelings of isolation and apartness. Housing, too, is often a problem for staff of reservation schools, and you are encouraged to work with community members to arrange for suitable housing for new staff members.

Professional Growth and Development

The opportunity for professional growth can be a powerful draw during teacher recruitment and selection and can inspire teachers to remain in your school over time. Reservation schools have met with success through offering staff development opportunities in a variety of formats. Suggestions for professional growth programs include:

Experienced administrators offer guidelines for professional development programs.

- Allow staff members to determine the kinds of staff development they need; then work with them to prioritize needs and set up activities.
- Work with staff to develop individualized professional growth plans.
- Include visits to other schools as part of staff development; teachers gain new perspectives and motivation to try new approaches.
- Be aware of grant opportunities and work with staff to apply for and make use of these.
- Encourage staff participation in teacher exchange programs.
- Arrange for staff to experience proven staff development programs, e.g., Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement (TESA).
- Be closely involved in observation and supervision of staff. Work with staff members to develop goals and use observation/supervision activities as a means for mutual learning and trust building.
- Help staff to set up peer coaching arrangements to improve teaching skills.
- Make certain that teacher evaluation includes positive feedback, and be prepared to provide help where performance is weak.

Administrative Leadership

Teachers identify local school leadership as the main reason for staying in teaching positions or leaving them.

The literature review, mail survey, in-person interviews, and panel discussion all identified administrative leadership as a critical factor in teacher retention. Indeed, local school leadership was cited more often than any other element as the

reason the teachers who stayed, stayed, and the ones who left, left. What actions on the part of the school administrator can increase the likelihood that teachers will stay in their positions? What can you do to retain your staff?

Along with **competitive wages** (which you may not be able to influence very much) and **opportunities for professional growth** (which we have already discussed), Jensen cites **prestigious and meaningful work** and **professional working conditions** as critical factors in teacher retention. These are areas of need which you can influence in ways great and small, making an enormous difference in the professional climate of your school.

Research cites critical factors in teacher retention.

Giving teachers recognition for their work is well-documented as a successful method of creating teacher satisfaction and motivation. Experienced reservation principals recommend such things as writing notes to teachers acknowledging their efforts and successes, providing them frequent positive verbal feedback on their work, celebrating their birthdays and providing other kinds of schoolwide recognition ceremonies.

Experienced educators in general and reservation school principals in particular point to the importance of administrators providing support and encouragement to staff to share their ideas, take on expanded responsibility, and pursue their professional growth. You are in a position to inspire staff to develop their capabilities, and steps taken to do so both hold good teachers and help them to become better teachers.

The effective schooling literature of recent years has made clear that successful schools (those in which students have high achievement and positive attitudes and social behavior) often differ from unsuccessful schools in terms of the leadership role taken by the principal. That is, when the principal sees his/her responsibilities as limited to financial, personnel, facilities and public relations management, the quality of the school often suffers — the instructional program is not cohe-

Principals who take instructional leadership roles are most successful in fostering positive school climates.

sive, students are dissatisfied, teachers leave. When, on the other hand, the principal takes responsibility for guiding the development and implementation of the instructional program, student outcomes and overall school climate are greatly improved.

The experience of reservation school administrators with this general principle has led them to advocate that you be closely involved with the instructional program in such ways as:

- spending time in classrooms working with teachers and students
- working with staff on selecting/developing instructional materials
- helping insure that your school's curriculum content and testing program are well aligned

The provision of instructional leadership is an area in which the small, rural, reservation school often has the edge over larger systems: the principal is normally quite involved in the educational program, may routinely teach some classes, and is not so overwhelmed with bureaucratic responsibilities as to lose touch with the students and their instruction.

Work to maintain open communication with your staff. It is important that established methods exist for dealing systematically with issues as they arise, and that this be accomplished in a timely and efficient manner. Regular administrative meetings, conducted with a solution-oriented approach to business matters, will provide a positive setting for dealing with staff concerns.

An open, flexible administrative style works best in reservation school environments.

In general, American Indian people greatly value a sense of humor and the capacity to see and expose one's own foibles — especially in people occupying positions of power. Don't take yourself too seriously, say experienced reservation administrators, and don't take personally the issues that arise in your school. Depersonalize the problem, be flexible and open

to staff feedback, and engage in participatory decision making. This general approach to dealing with problems is congruent both with the findings of management research and with the operational style of many Indian tribes.

In your dealings with the community, experienced administrators from reservation schools recommend that you seek a warm and open school/ community relationship, but that you also keep it on a professional level. It is important that you be knowledgeable about and respectful of tribal politics. Indeed, following the tribal political protocol will often be necessary in order to communicate and get things done effectively. On the other hand, it is important that you not allow yourself to become embroiled in tribal politics. It is not beneficial for the school or the community if you take a public stance on internal tribal affairs or affairs between the tribe and external groups. Instead, positive school/community relationships can be achieved through the kind of methods described in the section on induction and through such practices as involving tribal leaders in presenting awards and other forms of recognition to students.

Be knowledgeable about tribal politics, but remain detached.

In your dealings with students, work to instill a sense of school spirit and pride. Your close participation in the instructional program will help foster a positive climate and good relationships with students. Work to develop programs which will foster student leadership qualities. Communicate — and insure that your staff communicates — high expectations for student learning and behavior. Develop and conduct a firm, fair discipline program.

School spirit, student leadership, and firm, fair discipline characterize successful relationships with students.

In your dealings with other administrators in your region, work to develop a network for communication and support. And work to establish a supportive relationship with the district superintendent and other district staff.

These kinds of relationships help to create the sort of professional environment where school staff tend to stay. They know they are valued professionally and personally, and they

know they work in a context of goodwill and good communication among all groups connected with the school.

We hope that this guide will help you to approach your administrative responsibilities with a better understanding of the factors related to teacher turnover and some strategies for attracting and keeping qualified teachers. Several resources which can help you implement the suggestions in this guide are cited in Appendix D.

Good schools and good teachers go together.

In concluding this guide, we remind you that good schools and good teachers go together. By putting into practice the findings of research and the wisdom of reservation school administrators, we trust that these two crucial elements will go together under your supervision. As Jensen points out, "capable candidates seek effective schools. Schools that offer good working conditions...attract outstanding educators. Better yet, they keep outstanding educators."

Appendix A

POSITION GUIDE

A. General Nature of the Position
   1. Broad goals of the district
   2. Organizational structure of the district, and of the particular building where the vacancy exists
   3. Working conditions
   4. General expectations of the teacher:
      a. In the classroom
      b. In relationships with other staff members and administrators
      c. In relationships with students, parents and the community

B. Dynamic Features of the Position
   1. What is likely to be more important at the beginning of the assignment?
   2. What aspects of the assignment are likely to change?
   3. How will the position be affected by other people?
   4. What is the nature of the students?
   5. How will the community influence this position?

C. Teacher Behaviors/Skills
   1. Required
      a. In the classroom
      b. In relation to supervisors
      c. In relationships with others in the district and at the Education Service District (ESD) or other intermediate service agency
      d. In relationships outside the school system
   2. Desired
      a. In the classroom
      b. In relationship to supervisors
      c. In relationships with others in the district and AEA
      d. In relationships outside the school system

D. Teacher Characteristics Sought
   1. Aptitudes
   2. Social
   3. Interests

Appendix A
(continued)

E. Desired Preparation and Experience
   1. College preparation
   2. Certification
   3. Teaching experience

F. Compensation
   1. Number of days in contract
   2. Salary
   3. Fringe benefits

Adapted from: *Recruiting Special Education Personnel for Iowa Schools*, by Sue Jorgensen and Linda Epsey. Mountain Plains, IA: Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center, Drake University, 1986, pp. 28-29.

Appendix B

NEEDS AREA IDENTIFIED BY MASLOW AND ATTRIBUTES OF RURAL COMMUNITIES

Maslow's need areas:	Characteristics of Rural Communities:
Social needs	- friendliness of small communities
	- potential for status in small communities
Self-esteem needs	- flexible programming to work in one's own interest area
	- small enrollments, individual attention to students
	- district focus on quality education
Self-actualization needs	- administrative support for professional growth and development
	- peer support environments
	- professional growth opportunities
	- self-development opportunities such as proximity to professional libraries or extended universities

From: *Recruiting Special Education Personnel for Iowa Schools*, by Sue Jorgensen and Linda Epsey, Mountain Plains, IA: Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center, Drake University, 1986, p. 21.

Appendix C

RESOURCES FOR RECRUITMENT FOR RESERVATION SCHOOLS IN THE NORTHWEST

State Departments of Education, Indian Education Specialists

Idaho:

Harold R. Goff, Coordinator
Adult Education and Indian Education
Idaho State Department of Education
Len B. Jordan Office Building
Boise, ID 83720
(208) 334-2186

Montana:

Robert Parsley, Specialist
Indian Education
Office of Public Instruction
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620
(406) 444-3013

Oregon:

Robin Butterfield
Indian Education/Civil Rights Specialist
Oregon Department of Education
700 Pringle Parkway S.E.
Salem, OR 97310-0290
(503) 373-7123

Washington:

Willard Bill, Supervisor
Indian Education
Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Old Capitol Building
Olympia, WA 98504
(206) 583-3635

Appendix C
(continued)

Regional Title IV Resource Center

Resource and Evaluation Center Three
United Indians of All Tribes Foundation
1945 E. Yale Place
Seattle, WA 98102
(206) 328-2850

Regional Offices of the Bureau of Indian Affairs

Van Peters
Area Education Program Administrator
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Portland Area Office
P.O. Box 3785
Portland, OR 97208
(503) 231-6702

Verlin Belgarde
Area Education Program Administrator
Bureau of Indian Affairs
316 North 26th Street
Billings, MT 59101
(406) 657-6375

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

Joseph Coburn, Director
Research and Development Program for Indian Education
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500
Portland, OR 97204
(503) 275-9600

Appendix D

REFERENCES AND OTHER RESOURCES

Brzoska, T.; Jones, J.; Mahaffy, J.; Miller, K.; and Mychals, J. *Mentor Teacher Handbook*. Olympia, WA: Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1987 (in press).

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Nelson, S. R. *Teacher Turnover in Reservation Schools of the Northwest*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, September 1986.

Schlechty, P. C. "A Framework for Evaluating Induction into Teaching." *Journal of Teacher Education* 36 (1985): 37-41.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

Dr. Robert R. Rath, Executive Director
Dr. Ethel Simon-McWilliams, Associate Director

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) is an independent, nonprofit research and development institution established in 1966 to assist education, government, community agencies, business and labor in improving quality and equality in educational programs and processes by:

- Developing and disseminating effective educational products and procedures
- Conducting research on educational needs and problems
- Providing technical assistance in educational problem solving
- Evaluating effectiveness of educational programs and projects
- Providing training in educational planning, management, evaluation and instruction
- Serving as an information resource on effective educational programs and processes including networking among educational agencies, institutions and individuals in the region

Programs

Center for Professional Development
John Mahaffy, Director

Desegregation Assistance Center
Ethel Simon-McWilliams, Director

Education and Work
Larry McClure, Director

Evaluation and Assessment
Gary Estes, Director

Literacy and Language
Stephen Reder, Director

Multifunctional Resource Centers
Lois Fiaui, Jose Licano-Palma, Directors

Pacific Regional Educational Program
John Kofel, Director

R&D for Indian Education
Joe Coburn, Director

Rural Education
Steve Nelson, Director

School Improvement
Bob Blum, Director

Technology
Don Holznagel, Director

Program Support

School Improvement Coordination
Rex Hagans, Director

Institutional Development and Communications
Jerry Kirkpatrick, Director

Finance and Administrative Services
Joe Jones, Director

Board of Directors

Ed Argenbright
Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction

C. J. Baehr
Manager, Hawaii Interactive Television System

Chuck Bailey
Education Director
Washington State Labor Council AFL/CIO

Robert D. Barr
Dean, OSU/WOSC School of Education
Oregon State University

Barbara Bell
Attorney
Great Falls, Montana

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Superintendent
Missoula Elementary District (Montana)

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Teacher
Coeur d'Alene School District (Idaho)

Frank B. Brouillet
Washington Superintendent of Public Instruction

Joanne Crosson
Director, Educational Relations
Pacific Northwest Bell

William Demmert
Alaska Commissioner of Education

Jean M. Dobashi
Teacher
Kauai High/Intermediate School (Hawaii)

Verne A. Duncan
Oregon Superintendent of Public Instruction

Jerry L. Evans
Idaho Superintendent of Public Instruction

Earl Ferguson
Superintendent
Klamath Falls Union High School District (Oregon)

Joseph Haggerty
Principal
Blanchet High School
Seattle, Washington

James E. Harris
Beaverton School Board (Oregon)

Richard L. Hart
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John Kohl
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Teacher
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Joe McCracken
Superintendent
Lockwood Elementary District (Montana)

Richard McCullough
Superintendent
La Grande School District (Oregon)

Zola McMurray
Business Woman
Lewiston, Idaho

G. Angela Nagengast
Teacher
Great Falls High School (Montana)

Gloria B. Nelson
Director of Education
Guam Department of Education

Edie Orner
Teacher
Corvallis School District (Oregon)

Barney C. Parker (Chairman)
Superintendent
Independent District of Boise (Idaho)

Fred Pomeroy
Superintendent
Kenai Peninsula Borough Schools (Alaska)

Dennis Ray
Superintendent
Walla Walla School District (Washington)

Doris Ray
Fairbanks School Board (Alaska)

Henry Sablan
Superintendent of Education
Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands

Tauese Sunia
Director of Education
Government of American Samoa

Charles Toguchi
Superintendent
Hawaii Department of Education

Daro Weital
Director, Office of Education
Federated States of Micronesia

Doyle E. Winter (Vice Chairman)
Superintendent
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Goldstein Building, Room 506
130 Seward Street
Juneau, Alaska 99801
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Pacific Region Educational Center:
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1409
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
(808) 533-1748

Rocky Mountain Office:
1860 Lincoln Street, Suite 320
Denver, Colorado 80295
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